SN 22.80 — SN 22:80 Almsgoers | Piṇḍolya Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Almsgoers

Piṇḍolya Sutta (SN 22:80)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then, after having dismissed the Saṅgha of monks over a particular incident, he early in the morning adjusted his lower robes and, taking his bowl & outer robe, went into Kapilavatthu for alms. After having gone for alms in Kapilavatthu, after his meal, returning from his almsround, he went to the Great Forest for the day’s abiding. Plunging into the Great Forest, he sat down at the root of a veḷuva sapling as his day’s abiding.

Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thought arose in his awareness: “I have turned away the Saṅgha of monks. But here there are monks who are new—not long gone

forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when a young calf does not see its mother, there may be alteration in it, there may be change; in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when young seedlings don't get water, there may be alteration in them, there may be change; in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. What if I were to aid the Saṅgha of monks as I did before?"

Then Brahmā Sahampati—having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One's awareness—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, disappeared from the Brahmā world and reappeared in front of the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he knelt down with his right knee on the ground, saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart, and said to him: "So it is, O Blessed One! So it is, O One Well-Gone! The Blessed One has turned away the Saṅgha of monks. But here there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see the Blessed One, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when a young calf does not see its mother… Just as when young seedlings don't get water… in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see the Blessed One, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Let the Blessed One delight in the Saṅgha of monks! Let the Blessed One welcome the Saṅgha of monks! Let the Blessed One aid the Saṅgha of monks as he did before!"

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Brahmā Sahampati, sensing the Blessed One's acquiescence, bowed down to the Blessed One and, after circumambulating him, keeping him to his right, disappeared right there.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to the Banyan Park. On arrival he sat down on a seat made ready. After he had sat down he worked a psychic feat such that the monks went to him contritely, in ones and twos. On arrival, they bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there the Blessed One said to them, "Monks, this is the lowliest form of livelihood, that of an almsgoer. A term of abuse in the world is, 'You go about as an almsgoer with a bowl in your hand!' And yet sons of good family take up (this livelihood) with compelling reason, in dependence on a compelling reason—not coerced by kings nor coerced by thieves nor from debt nor from fear nor to earn a livelihood, but (with the thought): 'I am oppressed with birth, aging, & death, with sorrows, lamentations pains, distresses, & despairs. I am oppressed with stress, overcome with stress. Perhaps an ending of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be found!'

"And although this son of a good family has gone forth in this way, he is covetous, with strong passion for sensual desires, with a mind of ill will, of corrupt resolves, his

mindfulness muddled, unalert, unconcentrated, his mind distracted, loose in his sense faculties. Just as a log from a funeral pyre, burning at both ends, smeared with excrement in the middle, fills no use as timber either in the village or in the wilderness: I speak of this person with this comparison. He has missed out on the enjoyments of the householder, and yet does not fulfill the goal of the contemplative life.

“Monks, there are these three types of unskillful thinking: thinking of sensuality, thinking of ill will, thinking of harm. These three types of sensual thinking cease without remainder in one who dwells with his mind well established in the four establishing of mindfulness or who develops the themeless concentration.1 This is reason enough, monks, to develop the themeless concentration. The themeless concentration, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, great benefit.

“Monks, there are these two views: the view of becoming and the view of non-becoming. There the instructed disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Is there anything in the world to which I could cling without being blameworthy?’ He discerns: ‘There is nothing in the world to which I could cling without being blameworthy.’ He discerns: ‘In clinging, I would be clinging just to form. In clinging, I would be clinging just to feeling… perception… fabrications. In clinging, I would be clinging just to consciousness. From that clinging of mine as a requisite condition would come becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition, birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging, illness, & death, sorrow, lamentation pain, distress, & despair would come into play. Thus would be the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.’

“What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“… Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“… Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“… Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever….

“Any perception whatsoever….

“Any fabrications whatsoever….

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

Note

1. See MN 121 and SN 47:10.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 60; AN 4:95; Ud 3:3; Iti 49